



## CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

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November 21, 2013

Item 2

Dear California Ocean and Coastal Community,

As we approach the end of 2013, I am pleased with the substantial progress the OPC and partners have made over the past year, and I look forward building off these accomplishments. I am happy to report that we have successfully transitioned OPC staff to Sacramento, we have hired an exceptional analyst, Joanna Stone, and we are in the process of selecting a new environmental scientist to add to our talented team.

At our November 21<sup>st</sup> meeting we will hear from staff about ongoing progress and discuss next steps for three priority areas: marine debris, fisheries and sea level rise. We are excited to engage the OPC in a dialog about these important topics to target the state's collective efforts and identify steps towards achieving tangible outcomes in the coming year.

The majority of the meeting will focus on OPC's important work on fisheries, and how we can support our key state partners, the Department of Fish and Wildlife and Fish and Game Commission, to achieve our various mandates, including developing Fishery Management Plans and the California Sustainable Seafood Initiative. There are many opportunities before us, and we look forward to discussing new approaches to fisheries management and governance. We began this conversation at the OPC-SAT meeting on September 4<sup>th</sup> with enlightening insights from OPC-SAT members, new DFW Marine Region Manager Craig Shuman, DFW State Managed Marine Species Program Manager Tom Barnes, and Fish and Game Commission Director Sonke Mastrup. The presentations and discussions at the OPC meeting will build off the OPC-SAT meeting conversations and the results of 11 recently completed rapid fisheries assessments. We are excited about new possibilities to craft a comprehensive fishery management program.

As a follow up from the June 28<sup>th</sup> workshop on marine debris, we will present a report detailing ongoing efforts in California to address marine debris, and a revitalized approach to effectively reduce marine debris. Staff will also provide an update on recommended projects for the first round of the Local Coastal Program Sea-Level Rise Grant Program. The science around climate change and sea-level rise is ever changing, and with the rolling release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fifth Assessment Report, we acknowledge the critical need for technical assistance to incorporate evolving science in guidance and planning for sea-level rise and other climate change impacts.

Beyond these three priority areas, we are eager to continue sharing the recently released Coastal Geoportal with new users, and continuing development of a comprehensive management strategy for the statewide marine protected area network. This document will lay the foundation for a partnerships-based approach for MPA management. We initiated engagement with California tribes this month, and look forward to including valuable perspectives from tribes and other stakeholders as we craft and refine the plan for a draft release in early 2014.

2013 was an exciting and action-packed year, and it looks like 2014 will turn out that way as well! I hope that you all have a happy and restful holiday season, and that we are able to hit the ground running on our important work in 2014!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Catherine Kuhlman".

Cat Kuhlman  
Executive Director



**California Ocean Protection Council (OPC)  
Executive Director's Report  
November 21, 2013**

*The Executive Director's Report provides an update on OPC outcomes and accomplishments since the previous OPC meeting. This report covers July 2013 to November 2013.*

**1. Strategic Plan Issue Area 1: Science Based Decision making**

**California Coastal Geoportal.** The new California Coastal Geoportal officially launched in mid-September and can be accessed at <http://portal.gis.ca.gov>. The Coastal Geoportal is a user-friendly website for finding high priority coastal and marine datasets, such as aerial photos, marine protected areas, and coastal habitats. Using the portal, someone can also view the data on a map, as well as share and print the maps with others. Lastly, the website also offers a list of tools and resources where one can discover other related data holdings and tools, including the NOAA Sea Level Rise Viewer and California's ocean observing data.

The Coastal Geoportal was developed by the OPC and the Department of Technology with significant input from the California Coastal and Marine Geospatial Working Group, other state agency staff, and non-governmental partners. The Coastal Geoportal was developed in response to AB 2125 (Ruskin, 2010), which directed the OPC to increase access to scientific information relevant to coastal and ocean resource management decisions.

**New OPC Science Advisory Team Members.** The OPC Science Advisory Team selected two new members, Dr. Holly Doremus and Dr. Gretchen Hofmann. Please refer to the OPC Science Advisor's report for more information.

**Seafloor and shoreline mapping.** Data about California's seafloor are now available for download through the Coastal Geoportal's Tools and Resources page thanks to our mapping partners, California State University Monterey Bay and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). OPC staff continues to hear that these data are being used frequently for various education and management purposes. The last phase of this project is mapping San Francisco Bay which is expected to begin before the end of 2013. These data will help model flood risks from waves, storms and sea level rise around the Bay. In addition, we believe these data will assist wetland restoration projects in the San Francisco Bay and the Living Shorelines Project, which is an innovative sea-level rise adaptation project using native oyster beds and eelgrass.

USGS is also working on publishing "interpreted" maps using the raw seafloor mapping data. By interpreting the bathymetric data, we can identify more detailed information about the offshore areas such as benthic habitat and geology, providing state coastal and marine managers with valuable baseline information. These maps are being developed in regional blocks and will be published as available throughout 2014.

The CA Coastal Data Merge project is also making great progress. This highly collaborative project is merging the many large elevation data sets along the CA coast such as topographic LiDAR and seafloor mapping data into one seamless map of the California's offshore and onshore coastline. Contractors have submitted the final merged data sets to NOAA, which are now under review for quality assurance. The final product (a 1-meter digital elevation model for the entire CA coastline) is expected to be available by the end of 2013.

## 2. Strategic Plan Issue Area 2: Climate Change

***West Coast Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Science Panel.*** In early September, the California Natural Resources Agency, on behalf of the OPC, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Oregon to jointly sponsor a high-level science panel to address the issue of ocean acidification and hypoxia. The West Coast Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Science Panel will provide state-level decision makers with the knowledge needed to evaluate and develop action plans for these complex issues. The science panel is convened under the leadership of the California Ocean Science Trust and Oregon Institute of Natural Resources, and consists of a team of 20 experts from California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. The OPC called for the creation of the science panel last year, and we are excited to collaborate with our West Coast partners on this endeavor.

***Safeguarding California Plan: An Update to the 2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy.*** OPC staff are working in collaboration with Ann Chan, the Deputy Secretary for Climate Change with the Natural Resources Agency, on the draft of the oceans and coastal resources chapter of the *Safeguarding California Plan: An Update to the 2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy*. OPC staff members have consulted with state agency staff members from the Coastal and Ocean Working Group for the Climate Action Team (CO-CAT) and public meetings were held in September and October of 2013 to seek input on what the state should address in this update. A public review draft will be released by the end of 2013.

## 3. Strategic Plan Issue Area 3: Sustainable Fisheries and Marine Ecosystems

***Marine Protected Areas.*** The OPC continues to lead, facilitate and fund the implementation of California's marine protected areas (MPAs) working with diverse partners. We are continuing to lead a collaborative effort to develop The California Statewide Marine Protected Area Management Plan. This plan will serve as guidance for all federal, state, local, tribal, and NGO partners that are interested in supporting the policy and management of California's MPA network. The plan provides policy guidance for collaboration and management, and identifies the roles and responsibilities of all partners. With funding from the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation, we are working closely with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Fish and Game Commission, and the California Ocean Science Trust to develop the document. Earlier this month we organized an advance tribal outreach and informational session about the plan to ensure that tribes were aware of the plan's development, understand its purpose and goals, and provide an opportunity for tribes to participate in shaping the plan early on in its development process. The OPC will be facilitating government-to-government consultation on the plan for interested tribes. The plan will provide continuing to be revised, and will be shared with a broader audience including our partners and the public early next calendar year. This plan will ultimately be implemented within and across sector and scale, building upon the valuable resources available to ensure the success of California's MPA network.

Monitoring the performance of the MPA network is continuing with OPC support. In the North Coast region, the Baseline Program Management Team (DFW, OPC, MPA Monitoring Enterprise and California Sea Grant) received 17 proposals in response to a request for proposals. Selected projects will conduct baseline characterization and monitor initial changes in response to MPA implementation. Proposals have been reviewed by both technical and local experts, and a funding announcement will be made shortly. In the Central Coast, OPC staff are working with DFW and the MPA Monitoring Enterprise on updating the Central Coast Monitoring Plan and planning for ongoing monitoring in the region.

In addition to monitoring, the OPC is engaged in efforts to demonstrate and communicate the benefits and importance of California's MPAs. The [Thank You Ocean](#) campaign (a partnership between the State of California and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and the [Ocean Communicators Alliance](#), completed workshops throughout the state, with the last one held in Eureka in July. In October, Secretary Laird presented California's collaborative approach at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Wilderness Congress in Salamanca, Spain, and I gave a presentation about California's MPA network at the International Marine Protected Area Conference in Marseille, France.

***Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle Summit.*** We were excited to work with our colleagues to help participate in the first Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle Summit held in Monterey October 14-16<sup>th</sup>. This summit will serve as the foundation for an ongoing relationship between California and Indonesian officials to address ongoing threats to the Leatherbacks continued survival. Endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtles nest on Indonesian beaches and swim over 6,000 miles to the California Coast, including Monterey Bay, to feed on brown sea nettle jellyfish.

The Leatherback Summit brought together leaders to foster bi-national collaboration between California and TAMBRAUW-INDONESIA toward mutual conservation goals to address conservation and recovery efforts of the endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtle. The Summit goals include: strengthen communication, and address threats to leatherbacks and help ensure continued participation between both entities to help recover this iconic species. The Summit coincided with the annual Pacific Leatherback Conservation Day (Oct 15) as established by the legislature and Governor Brown in the passage of AB 1776 in 2012.

#### 4. Strategic Plan Issue Area 4: Coastal and Ocean Impacts from Land Based Sources

***Marine Debris.*** The Ocean Protection Council Sea Grant Fellows recently compiled a report, *Marine Debris: A Snapshot of Work in California* in order to analyze the work currently taking place on the issue statewide. Over 30 entities participated, giving a comprehensive look at the substantial effort of state and local agencies and NGOs working towards reducing marine debris. Most notably, these efforts include significant assessment, cleanup and removal work. Prevention of marine debris is addressed on the local level with ordinances regulating common marine debris items such as plastic bags and polystyrene. Additionally, organizations report research needs and findings. Several needs and gaps are identified in the report for which OPC should assume leadership. Please refer to agenda item number 4.

Additionally, the West Coast Governors Alliance on Ocean Health (WCGA) announced the release of its Marine Debris Strategy. The strategy aims to reduce and prevent marine debris on a broad scale through addressing topics such as land-based debris, derelict fishing gear, and other cross-cutting issues along the West Coast. The strategy's main objectives include: preventing marine debris from entering the ocean or littering beaches; maximizing recovery of marine debris in the ocean or on shore; reducing and preventing the negative impacts of marine debris; and enhancing existing efforts through communication and collaboration among interested parties on the West Coast. The WCGA addresses the global and regional issue of marine debris through coordination activities and its soon to be released Marine Debris Database. The OPC is poised to support this important effort as a leader to carry the Strategy's momentum forward. The OPC Executive Director, as part of the WCGA Executive Committee, is in close contact with counterparts in Oregon and Washington on this issue.

***Coastal Sediment Management.*** The California Coastal Sediment Management Workgroup (CSMW), co-chaired by the California Natural Resources Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), is currently working with local and regional governments, NGOs and consultants to develop coastal regional sediment management plans (CRSMPs) for the majority of the California coast. Each CRSMP is intended to formulate locally relevant consensus-driven sediment management policy and guidance in order to restore, preserve and maintain coastal beaches and other critical areas of sediment deficit. Regional sediment management will sustain recreation and tourism, enhance public safety and access, and restore coastal sandy habitats. Progress on CRSMP development is advancing as follows:

- Completed CRSMPs:
  - San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties: environmental documents for implementation completed
  - Southern Monterey Bay: Environmental document preparation to begin
- Currently under development:

- San Francisco Open Coast: draft CRSMP to be released for public review in Spring 2014, with outreach and governance support from Association of Bay Area Governments
- Los Angeles County, Orange County, Eureka/Humboldt Bay region, San Francisco Central Bay: drafted and under review by CSMW management committee
- To begin:
  - Northern Monterey Bay: Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary will provide outreach and governance support for CRSMP effort
  - Morro Bay/San Luis Obispo: assessing local interest in developing CRSMP, San Luis Obispo Council of Governments has indicated interest in providing outreach and governance support.

In early 2014 the CSMW will hold six facilitated public stakeholders meetings throughout coastal California to inform and present different portions of the California Sediment Master Plan (SMP). It is important to note that the SMP is not one document per se, but a body of work consisting primarily of CRSMPs, informational and scientific reports, and computer-based tools. USACE funding for SMP development (approx. \$900K/yr.) is slated to end in 2015. However, the USACE is currently in discussions with the state about the level of funding it could provide after 2015 for SMP implementation. The state has provided a 50/50 match from a variety of funding sources for SMP development.

Additionally, CSMW is in negotiations with the Ocean Science Trust to provide peer review services for CSMW-commissioned documents prepared to assess and recommend appropriate mitigation measures for impacts associated with typical sediment management activities that might be recommended in CRSMPs.

## 5. Strategic Plan Issue Area 5: Existing and emerging ocean uses

***Desalination.*** The OPC continues to coordinate an interagency workgroup on seawater desalination where a main focus on the group is the State Water Resources Control Board's pending policy on desalination. The OPC has also convened meetings between state and federal regulatory and land management agencies and the proponents of the proposed Santa Cruz/Soquel desalination facility. At the request of the project proponents, these meetings were convened as way to exchange information throughout the environmental review process. There is an understanding among participants that information exchanged does not commit either the regulatory agencies to a particular position in the review process nor does it commit the project proponents to making particular changes to the project. The pending policy is now in the final stages of review and is expected to be finalized by the end of October.

The State Resources Control Water Board (SWRCB) has proposed to the OPC/CNRA that desalination mitigation fees be deposited in an OPC/CNRA account (e.g., Ocean Trust Fund) for the mitigation of impacts to marine protected areas. Given current plans for desalination facilities in Marin and San Diego counties, there is the potential for collection of substantial mitigation fees within the next few years. OPC/CNRA staff are working with SWRCB staff to identify and resolve all the relevant legal and operational issues associated with depositing mitigation fees, and to develop language to be included in the SWRCB's soon to be released desalination policy. From initial research, it appears that the statute governing the Ocean Trust Fund is broad enough to allow for the acceptance of regulatory mitigation fees, but OPC will need to obtain authorization from the Legislature to encumber those funds consistent with the mitigation requirements imposed by the Water Board on regulated entities.

## Related Initiatives

***West Coast Governor's Alliance on Ocean Health***. The Alliance has at long last hired a coordinator and we are excited to have Kim McIntyre on board to help move our agenda forward. The Alliance is focused on



four priorities and two of them, Ocean Acidification and Marine Debris have already been covered in this report. A brief update on the other two priorities Climate Change and Data are included here.

The Climate Change Action Team is updating its work plan, and a final document is forecast for this winter. The Regional Data Framework Team is poised to launch the West Coast Ocean Data Portal.

[Portal.westcoastoseans.org](http://Portal.westcoastoseans.org). Building off off existing state and federal portals (including the newly launched California Geoportal) this portal will curate information to help users easily find what they need. It will help managers, researchers, and the general public discover data relevant to west coast ocean planning, policy, and resource management questions This is a first step in creating a suite of analysis and communication tools to help connect data and people to inform issues unique to the west coast region. A network of state, federal, tribal, and NGO data mangers will be meeting in mid November to officially launch the portal, collect feedback, and discuss how to meet the needs of the partners.

***Public engagement.*** We continue to support opportunities for public engagement as well as partnerships with fellow state agencies. For the third year, the [Thank You Ocean](#) campaign partnered with the California Coastal Commission (CCC) to hold an amateur [photo contest](#) to pay tribute to California’s spectacular coast and ocean. The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual California Ocean and Coastal Amateur Photography Contest began Monday, June 24<sup>th</sup> and runs for six weeks. The contest allows for a wide participation, by holding a “viewers’ choice” award, where anyone can vote on photographs posted on the contest website, along with “judges’ choice” awards. The contest features great prizes from Fairmont Hotels, Hornblower Cruises and Events, and the Aquarium of the Pacific. This summer we received over 1,000 entries. The winning photographs truly captured California’s coastal beauty, and can be seen on the photo contest’s [website](#).

If you would like more detailed and specific information regarding the initiatives we have covered, please contact me at [catherine.kuhlman@resources.ca.gov](mailto:catherine.kuhlman@resources.ca.gov).